

# HOW "THE SKY PILOT" GOT HIS GRIP.

## The Author of "Black Rock" tells a good story of the Foothills.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

Ralph Connor's story of "The Sky Pilot," a tale of the foothills, tells about the winning of a whole community of rather rough citizens by a sincere, earnest young missionary, Arthur Wellington Moore. (Fleming H. Revell Company.) He came among them almost unheralded, and proved to them that he was a man as they were, but higher and better. The cowboys and ranchmen in the foothills were inclined to dissipation. The Noble Seven, which included more than seven, was a club whose purpose seemed to be drinking and gambling principally. Many Scotch and English men had come out to these Canadian hills, and among them no one was more influential than a certain personage nicknamed the Duke, a rather slim, haughty man, who showed that he was high-bred. The next who associated with him declared that he was "the son of a lord." The Duke was by all odds the most striking figure in the company of the Noble Seven, and his word went further than that of any other. His shadow was Bruce, an Edinburgh University man, metaphysical, argumentative, persistent, devoted to the Duke.

The Noble Seven had a meeting on a certain Sunday at the Hill Brothers' ranch and Bruce became unmanageable. Attempts to soothe him drove him mad, and he drew a revolver and commenced to shoot. The Duke attempted to stop him, and in the scuffle the weapon was discharged and Bruce wounded. He was taken home, and the next day it was found that he was in a precarious condition. The Sky Pilot, the Duke, and Ralph Connor, who tells the story, went to his cabin, but he was delirious, and threatening to shoot everything in sight. Indeed, he was shooting at the sheep, which he thought full of leering devils. He was singing the twenty-third Psalm when his three friends peeped in at him.

"The situation was one of extreme danger—a madman with a Winchester rifle. Something must be done and quickly. But what? It would be death to any one appearing at the door."

"I'll speak; you keep your eyes on him," said the Duke.

"Hello, Bruce! What's the row?" shouted the Duke.

"Instantly the singing stopped. A look of cunning delight came over his face as, without a word, he got his rifle ready pointed at the door."

"Come in," he yelled, after waiting for some moments. "Come in! You're the biggest of all the devils. Come on, I'll send you down where you belong. Come, what's keeping you?"

"Over the rifle-barrel his eyes gleamed with frenzied delight. We consulted as to a plan."

"I don't relish a bullet much," I said.

"There are pleasanter things," responded the Duke, "and he is a fairly good shot."

"Meantime the singing had started again, and, looking through the chink, I saw that Bruce had got his eye on the stove-pipe again. While I was looking the Pilot slipped away from us toward the door."

"Come back," said the Duke, "don't be a fool! Come back, he'll shoot you dead!"

"Moore paid no heed to him, but stood waiting at the door. In a few moments Bruce blazed away again at the stove-pipe. Immediately the Pilot burst in, calling out eagerly:

"Did you get him?"

"No," said Bruce, disappointedly, "he dodged like the devil, as of course he ought, you know."

"I'll get him," said Moore. "Smoke him out," proceeding to open the stove door."

"Stop!" screamed Bruce, "don't open that door! It's full, I tell you! Moore paused. 'Heads!' went on Bruce, 'smoke won't touch 'em.'"

"Oh, that's all right," said Moore, coolly and with admirable quickness, "wood smoke, you know—they can't stand that."

"This was apparently a new idea in demography for Bruce, for he snuck back, while Moore lit the fire and put on the teapot. He looked round for the teacaddy."

"Up there," said Bruce, forgetting for the moment his devil, and pointing to a quaint old-fashioned tea-caddy upon the shelf."

"Moore took it down, turned it in his hands and looked at Bruce."

"Old country, eh?"

"My mother's," said Bruce, soberly.

"I could have sworn it was my aunt's in Banymena," said Moore. "My aunt lived in a little stone cottage with roses all over the front of it. And he went into an enthusiastic description of his early home. His voice was full of music, soft and smiling, and poor Bruce sank back and stared, the glitter fading from his eyes."

"The Duke and I looked at each other."

"Not too bad, eh?" said the Duke, after a few moments' silence.

"Let's put up the horses," I suggested. "They won't wait for half an hour."

"When we came in the room had been

set in order, the teakettle was singing, the bedclothes straightened out, and Moore had just finished washing the blood stains from Bruce's arms and neck."

"Just in time," he said. "I didn't like to tackle these," pointing to the bandages."

"All night long Moore cooed and tended the sick man, now sitting softly to him, and again begging him with tales that meant nothing, but that had a strange power to quiet the nervous restlessness, due partly to the pain of the wounded arm and partly to the nerve-wrecking from his months of dissipation. The Duke seemed uncomfortable enough. He spoke to Bruce once or twice, but the only answer was a groan or curse, with an increase of restlessness."

"He'll have a close squeak," said the Duke. The carelessness of the tone was a little overdone, but the Pilot was stirred up by it."

"He has not been fortunate in his friends," he said, looking straight into his eyes."

"A man ought to know himself when the pace is too swift," said the Duke, a little more quickly than was his wont."

"You might have done anything with him. Why didn't you help him? Moore's tones were stern and very steady, and he

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HE WAS SINGING THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM WHEN HIS FRIENDS PEEPED IN AT THE DOOR.

never moved his eyes from the other man's face, but the only reply he got was a shrug of the shoulders."

"When the gray of the morning was coming in at the window, the Duke rose up, gave himself a little shake, and said:

"I am not of any service here. I shall come back in the evening."

"He went and stood for a few moments looking down upon the bed, fevered face; then, turning to me, he asked:

"What do you think?"

"I shall get some at the fort, thanks. They won't take any hurt from me there," he said, smiling his cynical smile."

"Moore opened his eyes in surprise."

"What's that for?" he asked me.

"Well, he is rather cut up, and you rather rubbed it into him, you know," I said, for I thought Moore a little hard."

"Did I say anything untrue?"

"No, not untrue, perhaps; but truth is like medicine—not always good to take."

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